

Chapter I

Introduction

“Sport has the power to change the world. The power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way little else can”

Nelson Mandela, 1992.

A. Background

Laos is the country with many importance events and fantastic festivals, and Laos celebrates several annual festivals called “Boun” in Lao Language, and are particular enjoyable and beautiful aspects of the traditional Lao lifestyle. Most festivals are connected with religion and the yearly rice farming cycles; while the timing of the festivals is calculated according to the Buddhist lunar. The major and well known festival held in the Lao, PDR is **Boun Suang Heua or Boat Racing Festival** in other name called Boun Ok Phansa is the last day of the Buddhist lent. It occurs on the 15th day of the 11th month of the lunar calendar. In the morning, donation and offering are made at temples around the country. In the evening, candlelight processions are held around the temples while hundreds of colourful floats decorated with flowers, incense and candles are set adrift down the rivers giving thanks to the river spirit (lai huea fai and loi ka thong). There are said to pay respect to the Buddha and to thank the mother of river for providing water for our lives as well as for blessing and to float bad luck of the past year away enabling the good luck to flow in. this colourful ritual has been carried on by Lao people for thousands of year (Lao Events and Festivals Calendar, 2015).

Boat Racing Festival or (Boun Xuang Heua in Lao Language) is a kind of traditional sport event. It is very popular and famous event, particularly in big cities of Laos such as Vientiane Capital, Luangpprabang City in the Northern of Laos and Pakse City in Champasak province in Southern of Laos. Laos do not have many kinds of traditional sports, only few of traditional sports like: Muay

Laos, Sepak Takraw, Traditional Archery or (Nar Kek in Lao Language), Gyroscopes.

Traditional racing boats are carved using one single tree. The boats belong to a village and are usually kept in a shelter on the temple grounds and come out only once a year for the race. Several days before the race the boats are cleaned and presented with offerings because the boats are considered sacred items. These boats can hold approximately fifty paddlers. The morning is devoted to women's crews and the afternoon to men's crews. The starting point is two kilometers upstream and the competition is between two boats at a time. The loser is eliminated. After the final race, all the boats participate in a final competition/show, which is rather spectacular. The winners receive a trophy, a silver cup and cash. While the boat racing has become a focus of entertainment, athletics and commerce, the Boat Festival is really an homage to water divinities and the Nagas, who are protector of the country. Teams of rowers are usually sponsored either by big name companies, such as Beer Lao, and Telecom companies or by Ministries and organisations in Vientiane Capital. (Laos Events and Festivals Calendar, 2015).

Traditional Boat Racing is not only, promote healthy practices, but also incorporate economic activities contributing to variant relationships found in sports tourism. Self-fulfilment seemingly is the underlying determinant for the common consumer of sports tourism. In addition, sports as an activity, has an affinity to tourism, resultantly complementary in nature. McDonnell (1999; in ASEAN Journal on Hospitality and Tourism. An Analysis of Event Tourism in Malaysia, 2003), event tourism can help destinations to attract more tourists, create attractive profile for destinations, position in the tourism market and provide a competitive marketing advantage. In general, the benefits from doing sport and events are good for mind, body and spirit. Furthermore, team sports are good for learning accountability, dedication, and leadership, among many other traits. Putting it all together by playing a sport is a winning combination. (Deery, Jago & Fredline, 2004).

In the present time, sport events and tourism are the huge and growing global industry with important economic implications. The sport events and the impact of travel and tourism have related benefits on host destination countries. However, there is research gap on the roles performed by sport events in tourism development and whether these roles of sport event are from traditional sport consumption. As implied by Gezt, (1991) general reasons for the increasing growth of this festival and special event phenomenon is because of economic prosperity, a more leisure-oriented life style, and ever-improving global communication.

Tourism is a fast growing industry and a valuable sector, contributing significantly to the local economy and society making it an important economic, social and cultural activity in many societies, both in developed and developing countries (Le-Klähn&Edwards, 2014; Telfer&Sharpley, 2007). The Laos government is increasingly organizing festivals and special events as an important part of promoting its tourism destinations, planning and development. However, the traditional sports in Laos are developing together with international sports and remains popular and famous. These includes Traditional Boat Racing Festival, Muay Lao, Sepak Takraw, Traditional Archery only to mention but few. Traditional Boat race (Hueua Xuang) was included for the first-time in the Laos National Sport Games in 1985 in Vientiane Capital. Since then, Boat Racing has been one of the major sport event in the Laos National Sport Games which is held every three years. After that, many of local districts also organized and conducted the competition every year from September to October and the awesome boat race can be seen along the Mekong River. As a consequence, with ancillary support from community and government, the TBR experienced the fastest event growth of development and that deserve to be uplifted to the international level. Therefore, this TBR was also competed in many ASEAN and Asia Competitions such as China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia (Lao National Traditional Boat Racing Federation, 2015).

Based on the discussion above, the traditional sport event also play a very important role in developing economics growth in Laos. In this research the writer

would like to elaborate more specifics on the contribution of traditional boat racing festival on the tourism development in Vientiane capital, Laos. This research will answer two question as following:

B. Formulation of the Problem

1. How is the perception of Lao people regarding to the roles of traditional boat racing festival on tourism development in Vientiane capital, Laos?
2. What aspects of activities, people and places that attract visitors to the event of traditional boat racing festival?

C. Purpose of the Research

The purposes of the research are following:

1. To explore and describe the important roles traditional boat racing festival on the development in Vientiane Capital, Laos.
2. To analysis many aspects involved in traditional boat racing festival such as economic activities, people involved and related tourism places that attract visitors to the event of Traditional Boat Racing Festival in Vientiane Capital, Laos.

D. Significance of the Research

The significance of this research consist of two major things:

1. General Significance:

This research aim to enhance the knowledge of people in Vientiane capital city on the importance of the role of sport event (traditional boat racing festival) and other factors on the tourism development. Another benefit is to promote Vientiane capital tourism places and Laos to the world via sports events and to improving the living cost of people and the infrastructures of tourism regarding the traditional boat racing festival.

2. Specific Significance:

- a. Researcher:

The research may broaden the perspective of other researchers in regard to traditional boat racing festival and tourism development in the future.

b. Organizing committee

To increase and develop the infrastructure of sport venue, facilities, system of competition, team officials, and coaches as well as the capacity of athletes in achieving their potentials.

c. Local Government and Department of Information, Culture and Tourism of Vientiane Capital.

This research give some information to the local government on how to develop similar program, to promote Lao PDR, especially tourism sites in Vientiane Capital, to improving infrastructure of local tourism places through the sports events. Furthermore, Local government as one of the organizers of sport event should be responsible for the transport, infrastructure, facilities management, tourism, media, accommodation and security. Also collaborate with the tour operators and provincial authorities in hosting local traditional festivals and other events that would raise awareness among potential domestic tourists.

E. Definition of terms

1. Tourism

a. Tourism first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1811. In 1937 the League of Nations recommended what may have been the first official definition of tourism by Mill (1990, p.17 in Standeven, J. & Knop, P.D, 1998): “any person visiting a country others than that in which he usually resides, for a period of at least 24 hours”.

b. Urry, J. (1990, p.1) stated that “There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period and otherness as experience which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life”.

c. The temporary movement of people beyond their own home and work locality involving experiences unlike those of everyday life. The experiences might take place as part of a holiday or as an ancillary to business travel (MacCannell, D, in Standeven, J. & Knop, P.D, 1998, p. 12).

2. Sport

The Council of Europe (1992), formally defined sport as all forms of physical activity, which through casual or organized participation, aim at improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels. Sport is about an experience of physical activities (McConnell, 1976).

The whole range of competitive and noncompetitive active pursuits that involve skill, strategy, and/or chance in which human beings engage, at their own level, simply for enjoyment and training or raise their performance to levels of publicly acclaimed excellence (Standeven, J. & Knop, P.D, 1998).

3. Event

According COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers, event are:

- a. An event is something that happens, especially when it is unusual or important. You can use events to describe all the things that are happening in a particular situation.
- b. An event is a planned and organized occasion, for example a social gathering or a sports match.
- c. An event is one of the races or competitions that are part of an organized occasion such as a sports meeting.

4. The Role of Sport Events

According to National Sport Tourism Strategy (p 3. 2012). Sport events are activities that belong to the group of created attractions, which every destination that plans the successful development of tourism should have. The main role of the event is to promote tourism through the autonomous power of attraction of the event itself and to complement the tourist supply of a particular destination, and sport event has always been an important part of society, but with the global emergence of sports tourism it has also become an increasingly important part of the economy.

5. Development.

According to the businessdictionary.com/definition/development.htm, development are:

- a. The systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements.
- b. An extension of the theoretical or practical aspects of a concept, design, discovery, or invention.
- c. The process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions.
- d. The process of adding improvements to a parcel of land, such as grading, subdivisions, drainage, access, roads, utilities.

6. Tourist

Building on the definition of tourism, a commonly accepted description of a tourist is “someone who travels at least 80 km from his or her home for at least 24 hours, for business or leisure or other reasons” (The United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1995). Stated that tourists can be:

- a. Domestic (residents of a given country travelling only within that country)
- b. Inbound (non-residents travelling in a given country)
- c. Outbound (residents of one country travelling in another country).

7. Visitor

Tourist Excursionist A visitor is defined as “any person traveling to a place other than that of his/her usual environment for less than twelve months and whose main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited” (Standeven, J. and Knop, P.D. 1998).

8. Traditional

According to the definition of “traditional” from the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus at Cambridge University Press: Traditional is the following or belonging to the customs or ways of behaving that have continued in a group of people or society for a long time without changing.

9. Traditional Boat Racing or TBR.

According to Laos Events and Festivals Calendar (2015), Traditional racing boats are carved using one single tree. The boats belong to a village and are usually kept in a shelter on the temple grounds and come out only once a year for the race. Several days before the race the boats are cleaned and presented with offerings because the boats are considered sacred items. These boats can hold

approximately fifty paddlers. The morning is devoted to women's crews and the afternoon to men's crews. The starting point is two kilometers upstream and the competition is between two boats at a time.

10. Festival

a. The term "festival" is said to be developed from the word "feast", and indicating "a time of celebration" (Derrett, 1999, p. 1).

b. Festivals are often used as a meeting point for societies to enjoy and celebrate. Thus, a generic definition for festival is "a public, themed celebration" (Getz, 1991, p. 2).

c. Additionally, in a book titled "Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival", Falassi explains that "festivals is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures" (Getz, 1991, p 2).

F. Organization of the Research

This research paper consists of five chapters:

Chapter I

This chapter describes the Research, Background, Formulation of the problem, Purpose of the research, Significance of the Research as well as Definition of Terms and Organization of the Research.

Chapter II

This chapter consists of Review of the Literature, Overview of TBR, Vientiane Boat Racing Festival, the Significant of TBR, Overview of Sport and Tourism, Tourism Development and Strategy and Sport Event in Laos, Overview of Laos, Overview of Vientiane and Tourism Places, Previous Relevant Research/Study, and Framework of Thinking.

Chapter III

This chapter describes of Research design, Location of the research, Respondents, Instrument of the Research, Technique of Collecting Data, Procedure, and Data Analysis.

Chapter IV

This chapter consist of two major issues; firstly is the Result of Research based on the questionnaire and interview responses, and the secondly is the Discussion of questionnaire and interview results.

Chapter V

This chapter consist of two major headings; the firstly is the Conclusion, and the secondly is the Recommendation.